

Winter 2010

The Promethean: Winter 2010

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THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT

HONORS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2010 ISSUE

CHINA 2010: A LIFE CHANGING JOURNEY BY JAIME GLANTZ, PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR



Photo: Donna Kowal

Honors students at the base of the Leshan Giant Buddha.

There is much to reminisce about China's natural beauty—the mountains, the irrigation systems, the pandas. There are centuries of important history to study—the ancient civilizations, the revolutions, and more recently the Olympics. There is also much to say about our stays in five star hotels, attempts to learn calligraphy and a bit of Chinese, meals at the most exquisite restaurants, private performances of Kung-fu and opera, shopping, and studying. And yet to be honest, these are not the experiences that I remember most clearly. Nor are they the experiences I considered the most important upon which to reflect when I searched for the words to describe my truest impression of China.

When asked about my trip, I recall my adventure to the market when I was lost and the police would not help me, but an old man at a local shop would. I think about the way the conflicts regarding the events of Tiananmen Square are considered “resolved” and thus dismissed, but the lessons of the cultural revolution are reiterated constantly. Parents bring their children, several times during their youth, to the best universities in the country in an effort to instill in them dreams of success. I remember the woman I saw buying her son a 150 USD pair of jeans from Old Navy and the crippled man splayed across a plank of wood, pedaling with one arm down the busy street. I think about the pollution, and the masks worn to combat it. I remember the elaborate welcoming ceremony for the highest-ranked female education official and the student from our ‘SUNY 150’ group that told me majoring in civil engineering had probably not been the best choice for her because no one wanted to hire a woman in the field. I think about the conservative wait staff at the most expensive restaurants in the city, and I think about the brothels we saw disguised as hair parlors and what I heard about women being auctioned on a downtown street side.

(Continued on page 3)

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY DR. DONNA KOWAL

With the start of the spring semester, the Honors Peer Mentor Program has been at the forefront of my mind lately. We recently began the process of recruiting mentors for the 2010-11 academic year with a new application. The new application includes a more detailed description of mentor roles, responsibilities and expectations, a list of preferred credentials and qualifications, and a required recommendation form to be completed by a faculty or professional staff member.

While serving as a peer mentor certainly involves many fun social activities, mentors also accept a major responsibility in guiding freshmen and transfers on a path to success. Mentors are experienced students who work one-on-one with new students, providing them with opportunities to interact with other Honors students and become a part of the Honors community; to learn about program requirements and extracurricular activities; and to acquire the essential knowledge and skills needed for a successful college experience at Brockport. Established in 2001-02, our Honors Peer Mentoring program is one of the longest running—not only within the State University of New York but nationwide—and its ongoing success is a product of the many dedicated peer mentors over the years who have selflessly devoted their time and efforts towards helping others.

With the goal of continually evaluating and improving the program, over the past several years we have conducted surveys of mentors and new students. We have also received constructive feedback from external evaluators—that is, Honors administrators from other institutions who are affiliated with the National Collegiate Honors Council. Time and again, these assessment activities have highlighted that our Honors community is deeply committed to peer mentoring and that our new students are grateful for the support and leadership provided by mentors.

Of course, the survey results and external evaluator reviews also pointed out areas that we can improve upon: the mentor selection screening process, the quality of academic planning advice that is tailored to specific majors, and the mentor training workshop—which should ensure a consistent experience among mentor/mentee groups. The new application came into existence after reviewing feedback from previous years and a meeting with Jim Eick and Brian Cairnduff (last year's student coordinators) and Andrea Newman, The College at Brockport's Coordinator of the First-Year Experience. It is the start of what I hope will be a collaborative effort to make next year's peer mentoring program even better. (By collaborative, I am referring to peer mentors playing an active role in shaping the program for the future!)

Ultimately, our goal is to assemble a great team of experienced Honors students who can provide high quality mentoring to new students—and to continually assess what works and what doesn't. In doing so, our program will continue serve as a vital part of the life of our Honors learning community.



Photo: Justin Jackson

Honors Program Leadership: Dr. Kowal and Dr. Banerjee

Dr. Donna Kowal, Honors Program Director

CHINA 2010: A LIFE CHANGING JOURNEY

BY JAIME GLANTZ



Jaime and friends pose at Beijing University.

(continued from page 1)

A quote by Wang Mang states "You can make any number of statements about China and they are all true: Things are good, things are bad; China is quite developed, and yet also underdeveloped. China has so many luxury hotels, malls, department stores, and restaurants... and yet at the same time, it is also possible to say that China is one of the poorest countries in the world." All that I have seen, experienced, contemplated and learned during my stay in China has led me to regard this statement as a very true one. China is not perfect, but for many, it is home. It is a nation struggling and thriving in an ever-changing global environment.

HONORS LOUNGE NEW LOOK

BY JUSTIN JACKSON, HISTORY MAJOR

Last semester, the Honors Program held a mural contest for all Honors students to design a composition for one of the walls in the Honors Lounge. The two winning designs, by seniors Charity Henderson and Natalie Thompson, were merged to create a stunning design. During winter break, the painting of the mural began and in just three short days, 90% of the mural was painted.

Below are pictures from the mural process:



Photos courtesy of Dr. Kowal



FRESHMAN THEATRE TRIP: *THE CLEAN HOUSE*

BY ASHLEY GREENMAN, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS & ECONOMICS MAJOR



Promotional poster for *The Clean House*

Editors' Note: Following an Honors Program tradition, the Freshman class took a Fall field trip to Geva Theatre in Rochester to see a play. The trip served as a supplement to the Honors 112 curriculum and our peer mentoring program.

“Uma mulher em busca da piada mais engraçada do mundo.” This is exactly how “The Clean House,” by Sarah Ruhl, opens: in un-translated Portuguese.

Matilde is a Brazilian woman hired as a maid by Lane, a successful American doctor. Lane values order and wants a clean house, but will not ‘stoop’ in such a way. After all, she did not “go to medical school to clean [her] own house.” Matilde is a live-in maid who hates cleaning because it makes her depressed. Her life goal is to come up with the funniest joke, and she often dreams of her deceased parents who were the funniest people in Brazil.

Lane’s sister Virginia has a similar obsession with order; however, she strongly believes that cleaning one’s house is a personal privilege above all else. She loves accomplishing housework because she feels in control. Eventually, Virginia easily convinces Matilde to let her clean her sister’s house while Matilde spends her time telling jokes.

Set in an entirely white living room (Jo Winiarski, set designer), the women interact rather impersonally, although Matilde’s warm personality attempts to draw out the lighter side of life. In contrast, Lane continues to address her maid and her sister coldly. We see not only a clash of cultures, but of class, and character as everyone’s ‘houses’ collide. Each woman believes strongly that she has chosen the best path, but sweeps her own insecurities, fears, and weaknesses ‘under the rug.’

The biggest collision occurs when a bright red pair of panties is discovered by Virginia in a load of clean laundry. Moments later Lane arrives home early from work to find her sister ironing her clothes. Her life begins falling apart as she also discovers that her husband Charles has found his “basherte,” or soul mate in Judaic tradition.

Charles arrives with his new Argentinean lover, Ana, who is full of ‘life force,’ and hopes that they can all get along and even go apple picking together. Ana is one of Charles’ patients, and is ironically dying of breast cancer. Their passion reminds Matilde of her parents and further motivates her to discover the world’s funniest joke- even if it means someone may die of laughter as her mother did.

Suddenly, everything in Lane’s life is in a shambles- her house, her career, her relationships. What seemed clean was really cluttered with unresolved messes. The women must cope with their oddities together as their clashes bring out what’s hiding deep within them. Virginia breaks down and destroys the spotless living room by overturning potted plants and throwing items to the floor in an effort to liberate herself from an obsession with cleanliness. The set remains in disarray as Charles travels to Alaska for a healing tree- contributing to the absurdity of it all.

Dramatically sad and hilarious in a congruent fashion, this play is everything but predictable. It begs the question, ‘How clean is your house?’ How often are the messes and questions of life ‘swept under a rug’ while we carry on seemingly in control? Experiencing this story challenges viewers to consider their perspective on life and death, relationships and struggles, success and ‘cleanliness.’ As students, we must challenge our perspective of life to ensure that we have truly considered the questions before us, rather than brushing them aside. This play presents a light-hearted and plot-twisting opportunity to examine one’s own perspective.

In my opinion, “The Clean House” can be summarized by Matilde’s final words– it is “A sea of untranslatable jokes where everyone is laughing.”

THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS CONFERENCE 2009

BY JUSTIN JACKSON, JESSICA GERACI AND DANIELLE BARTHEL

NCHC, the National Collegiate Honors Council, holds an annual national conference in the Fall for Honors students and faculty from across the country. The purpose of the conference is to bring together members from many different Honors colleges to exchange ideas and collaborate on a myriad of aspects of Honors programs. Round-table discussions, presentation sessions, workshops and other formal and informal gatherings serve as vehicles for sharing experiences and ideas.

As the Brockport Honors Newsletter team, we were chosen to accompany Dr. Kowal to this year's national conference in Washington, D.C. to assist her in leading a round-table discussion entitled 'Best Practices for Honors Newsletters.' The conversation brought together educators and students from Alfred State University, Texas Women's University and The College of St. Scholastica in Minnesota, among others. We assisted

each other in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of our respective publications and programs. It was a rewarding feeling to come away from the conference realizing the multitude of opportunities and benefits our Honors Program affords each of its students in comparison with other Programs we encountered.

On our first day at the conference, we experienced Washington by way of the Council's *City as Text* Program, where participants chose different parts of the city to explore on foot, in order to discover how the city functions alongside its Federal purpose. Justin journeyed to both the National and Natural History Museums, where he worked with students he continues to talk with. Danielle and Jessica explored the suburb of Adams Morgan, which is home to a diverse population of Washington's young adults. Dr. Kowal traveled to Capitol Hill and visited the Supreme Court and Library of Congress.

Throughout the next several days, we attended other informational sessions, gathering many ideas that we are interested in implementing in our Program in the future. Some of these ideas include Death by Chocolate, courtesy of Dr. Gordon Atlas of Alfred University, Honors Club organizational styles and an Honors advisory council. One of our favorite sessions was a lecture given by plenary speaker Freeman Hrabowski III of University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He addressed the position of modern Honors programs in expanding the definition of what it means to be an educated individual, and was quite an eloquent orator.



Photo: Donna Kowal
Our round-table discussion with Honors faculty and students from across the country.



Photo: Donna Kowal
Dr. Kowal, Jessica Geraci, Danielle Barthel and Justin Jackson at the conference.

In addition to academic endeavors, the Conference invited The Capitol Steps, a well-known political comedy troupe, to perform. Their impressions and songs were well enjoyed by the audience and left everyone ready for the desserts afterward. Our trip to Washington also left us with time for sightseeing, which we took full advantage of at night. By cover of darkness, we explored the monuments, taking in the history of our great nation.

Overall, the trip was a truly rewarding adventure that allowed each of us to experience the national honors community in a way that allowed for lasting relationships and great collaboration.

HONORS PROGRAM GIVES BACK

COMPILED BY JUSTIN JACKSON, HISTORY MAJOR

Community service is a rewarding experience that fosters personal growth and a sense of giving back to the community we are all a part of. In the Honors Program, there are numerous ways in which students and faculty have given back—through the peer mentoring system, Honors Club and program-wide events. Below are examples of what Honors students have been doing as a way of giving back and helping others:

- Stephanie Brannigan, Thomas Happell and Chris Wells led their peer mentor groups in making cards for members of our community this past holiday season.

- The Honors Club participated in the Adopt-A-Highway program and volunteered a Saturday morning to gather trash and debris near Redman Road.

- Amanda Wood's peer mentor group will participate in this year's Relay for Life, and they set up an Honors team to raise money for the American Cancer Society.

- The Honors Club volunteered at the *To Write Love on Her Arms* event by creating stress balls and donating money.



Photo: Justin Jackson

A group of Honors Club volunteers at *To Write Love on Her Arms*

WELCOMING DR. BANERJEE: Q&A

BY JUSTIN JACKSON, HISTORY MAJOR



Photo: Donna Kowal

A pizza gathering was held to welcome Dr. Banerjee to the program.

Q: Why did you want to become the Associate Director?

A: My association with the Honors Program at Brockport began several years ago when I taught my first Honors Section of Contemporary Issues in Health in the Spring of 2005. It was a wonderful experience interacting with Honors Students, who I found, were not only bright, but curious, motivated, extraordinarily articulate and usually went above and beyond the scope of the course to learn about the subjects we studied! Many of my advisees over the years have been Honors students, and I have also been thesis advisor for a few of them. I have made it a point to keep in touch with some of my former Honors students who are now either in graduate school, (one of them is a research fellow at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) or teaching in the profession. Over the years, I have also presented papers at the national conference of the American Public Health Association with a former Honors student who is now in the doctoral program in Epidemiology at the University of Rochester. My involvement with the program has also been in the capacity of "reader of names" for the Alpha Chi inductees and I had the good fortune of being picked to be Interim Assistant Director in the Spring of 2008. Needless to say, my connection with the Honors Program and Honors students has given me a great deal of joy and satisfaction, such that when this more permanent position became available, I quickly applied and am so happy to be officially a part of the program!

Q: What goals do you have for the program and what would you like to see happen?

A: I would love to see the Program get more exposure on campus (and beyond) and that our students' work gets showcased appropriately and often. The program's diversity in terms of its students – their research interests, backgrounds, goals and disciplines is a true asset and is integral to the mission of our College. My broad goal for the program is to ensure that such diversity thrives, and our very talented and exceptional students continue

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES: WHY I CHOSE HONORS

COMPILED BY JESSICA GERACI, MATH MAJOR

"I chose the Honors Program over other options offered at Brockport because I felt that it would provide me with the right atmosphere to grow as much as possible academically and beyond. The smaller class sizes and teaching styles in the Honors classes appealed to me most. I wanted a more personal and hands-on environment."

~**Hannah Moyer**, Nursing Major

"I chose Honors because of the fact that it complements the general education classes, while still creating a close-knit community. You're not completely secluded from the rest of the college, yet are close enough to form lasting relationships and a community of Honors students." ~**Chelsea Podyma**, Communication Major

"In my opinion, Honors is the best fit for me because it promotes strong bonds between fellow Honors students. The peer mentor groups, field trips, and Honors classes provide us with a sense of community that I have not seen the equivalent of in Delta." ~**Bonnie Gambrel**, Biology Major

"I chose the Honors Program because it allows for early registration. An added bonus is the small class sizes for Honors classes. That's a really great feature as it allows for more personal interaction and feedback from professors."

~ **Kathleen Weaver**, Business Major

ENGLAND

BY JESSICA GERACI, MATH MAJOR

When most people think of England, they picture London—Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, and Tower Bridge. Granted, there's something for everyone in London, but maybe that's the problem. There's not enough of anything for one person. Or maybe just not enough for me.

I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to visit England over winter break, and it was truly an eye-opening experience. I visited three cities—London, Birmingham, and York. Both London and Birmingham are a beautiful juxtaposition of old and new, but this wasn't the England I was picturing when planning my trip. There are countless churches, gorgeous stone government buildings, and pubs that date back centuries further than America can boast. But these large cities have lost the old-time charm that I was really looking for in England.

Undoubtedly, the three days I spent in York were the highlight of my trip. Walking around this small city (roughly the size of Buffalo, perhaps, without all of the suburbs), I was mesmerized by the history and culture that seemed to ooze from every building and street corner. The skinny pedestrian streets, houses that look like they're going to collapse in on themselves, low-ceilinged shops, and medieval architecture send you back in time—a most pleasant journey. Danielle Barthel, who is spending a semester in York, and I must have walked each street in the city proper at least three times in two days, but we saw something new and exciting around each turn. Imagine our surprise when, walking down the street, we spotted Henry, the trusted vacuum we all had in our freshman dorms, on the side of a building. It seemed almost as though we were meant to be there.

I suppose what I'm trying to say is that England is a wonderful country. The people are extremely welcoming, the history is fascinating, and the tea is amazing. But if you are fortunate enough to visit England, or any other country that is equally rich in history and culture, dig deeper than the tourist attractions and landmarks you see in all of the movies. Take a lesson from the National Collegiate Honors Council's *City as Text* program, and search out the roots of the cities. See how people really live, where they work and play, and what makes the country what it is for the thousands of people that live there. Don't ever take a place at face value. And, most importantly, remember that the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace only occurs every other day in the winter.



The Clock Tower and the London Eye.

STARTING A CLUB: WHAT IT TAKES

BY MARGUERITE LOWE, PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR

Ever since I transferred to The College at Brockport halfway through my freshman year, I've heard countless people telling me to get involved with clubs, activities, and campus life in general. I checked out several clubs and went to a bunch of activities, but none of them seemed to be the right fit for me. So what is a student to do when there's nothing here that interests them? Start a club, of course!

Being an avid horseback rider, I was very disappointed that the College didn't offer any sort of club or activity devoted to the sport of equestrian. So I did my research, got in touch with the club sports director, set up meetings, and planned until I went cross-eyed.

I began the initial stages of starting up the Brockport Equestrian Club (BEC) during the summer of 2009, by first filling out several club sport applications, and more importantly, finding a local stable that would be willing to offer their services to our club. This process took weeks to accomplish, as the paperwork was, at times, overwhelming. I even created a four-page constitution for the club, which was a complicated and brutal process. However, with a bit of luck and a lot of hard work, I was able to successfully apply, petition, and achieve probationary status for the Brockport Equestrian Club in the Fall.



"It is very important that anyone interested in starting a club...strive to create these groups. As the College broadens its extracurricular repertoire, it is crucial that people speak up for what they'd like to see, or even better, follow through and actually get the ball rolling for clubs and activities they want on campus. More so than this though, is the fact that you will get the opportunity to meet dozens of people who you would never get to know otherwise."

Right now our club is dedicated to providing a social network for anyone interested in being around horses and other horse people. It also gives anyone interested the ability to take riding lessons on a biweekly basis, regardless of experience level. Every club sport is required to do community service and fundraisers, so we are constantly on the lookout for new things to do in order to fulfill that component. So far, over 30 Brockport students have joined BEC, and many more seem interested in joining. It's a wonderful feeling to know that your hard work and dedication is appreciated by so many people.

This semester, BEC is aimed at achieving active club status, which means we will be allowed a budget next year, as well as gain a few other added benefits. We hope to eventually form an intercollegiate equestrian team, and go on trips to equine related events, such as conventions and horse shows.

It is very important that anyone interested in starting a club, be it sport or otherwise, strive to create these groups. As the College broadens its extracurricular repertoire, it is crucial that people speak up for what they'd like to see, or even better, follow through and actually get the ball rolling for clubs and activities they want on campus. More so than this though, is the fact that you will get the opportunity to meet dozens of people who you would never get to know otherwise. As much work as it is to create a club, in the end, the exorbitant effort and headaches are completely worth it. I encourage anyone with the gumption to start a club that interests them; you never know what might happen!

If you're interested in joining or have questions about Brockport Equestrian Club, check out our Facebook group, or e-mail mlope2@brockport.edu.

THE CREATIVE HONORS STUDENT: ART AND POETRY

Average Living

By Amber Karpie

Imagine feeling, living through each emotion
 With such memory and intensity
 As the mind scrambles
 Prying apart despair and happiness,
 In a swirl of everyday living
 Bursting with angles of reflection
 But which to face first?
 The pain, the wanting for answers,
 As the past silently weeps
 Behind unmarked gravestones
 And sins smeared with disgrace,
 Or the bliss of childish dreaming,
 Screaming along to known words,
 Jumping over small lakes over pavement,
 Laughing just so there's a reason to cry,
 Then love, the sensation of living, dying,
 The fragility of being held over mountains,
 Coupled with the blanket of serenity and trust,
 Closing eyelids for another night together,
 Doubt, fear, confusion, all neighboring cousins,
 Igniting anxiety in veins deep and thin,
 Overloads the head with thoughts of failure,
 Or impairs every sense of logic by ice,
 But happiness, the inner being of peace,
 Lies well hidden amongst the average grime,
 Carefully covered by day's heightening speed,
 Only to be blossomed by life's tender touch.

Self Portrait II, By Elise Micale



Self Portrait, By Laura Schmitt



THE CREATIVE HONORS STUDENT: ART AND POETRY

Sunday Morning Stroll, By Justin Jackson



French Window, By Natalie Thompson



Distance, By Charity Henderson



HONORS PROGRAM EVENTS: DEATH BY CHOCOLATE

The *Death By Chocolate* event was held in recognition of the Fall 2009 Peer Mentors for their semester of hard work.



CONTRIBUTE TO THE HONORS NEWSLETTER!

The Honors Program Newsletter is a publication dedicated to the Honors Program faculty, students and alumni. Articles are written by Honors students and are designed to provide information to the Honors community. Content will include a variety of topics, including research, Honors program news and events, student and professor spotlights, experiences, and creative work. For submissions or more information, please contact Justin Jackson at jjack4@brockport.edu.

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